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->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
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I'm getting a really late start with this week's issue - time is not
something that I have an over-abundance of these days; and my energy
levels aren't what they used to be! However, I'd be remiss if I didn't
take the opportunity to remind everyone of the importance of the upcoming
Memorial Day holiday.

Sure, Memorial Day for many of us is the unofficial beginning of summer,
even though we're still a month away from the actual date. Students are
graduating and/or ending classes for the summer months, and the weather
is really starting to be really terrific these days. However, Memorial
Day has a far more important meaning - the remembrance of those who have
died in the service of our country - mostly serving in our armed services.
These are the men and women who have lost their lives protecting our
country and those beliefs that have made the United States what it is
today. Whether or not you believe in our current military conflicts, or
the ones of years long past is immaterial. The fact is that men and
women have fought and lost their lives to protect those things that you
and I believe in, while we're able to stay in this country and move on
with our own personal lives.

While most of our servicemen and servicewomen sacrifice their "normal"
lives to serve their country, many have made the "ultimate" sacrifice
and never came home. Memorial Day is that time-honored holiday to
take some time to make sure that their memory is not forgotten.

So, whatever you have planned to welcome the unofficial start of summer,
be sure to take a moment to remember the real reason that we all have
this particular long weekend at this time of the year! And while you're
enjoying this long weekend, please do so responsibly

Until next time...

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                         PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                       compiled by Joe Mirando
                          joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and the year is just flying by, isn't it? I mean, it seems that it was only yesterday that we were talking about Christmas and winter storms and yearning for springtime.

Well, spring is well and truly here. It's warm outside and things are growing. Of course, those growing things need to be mowed and chopped and trimmed, but that's all part of it. Dana can tell you what happiness and satisfaction there can be in growing things. He's much more into yard work than I am, but even I feel the allure of a well-groomed yard and the scent of freshly mown grass and the rhododendron bush outside my window which, incidentally, has a nest with three robin chicks in it. They're being mercifully quiet so far, just sitting there looking like fuzzy dinosaur younglings, their mouths gaping open, looking for food.

Memorial Day is a scant few days away, and I ask that you take a moment or two during your partying or yard work or whatever and remember the men and women who've served our country throughout its history.

I've never liked the phrase "given their lives" when referring to our honored dead. In most cases, the have not GIVEN their lives. They OFFERED their lives. Their lives were not GIVEN, they were TAKEN. The fact that they offered their lives in the service of their country is an almost holy thing. It bespeaks a strength and a love of not only one's country, but one's way of life and one's fellow citizens.

It is true that, for many who serve, it is but a stepping stone; a way to get an education or a way up or a way out. And that's okay. There is nothing wrong with bettering oneself. Especially if it is in service to one's country and one's compatriots.

There are also those who choose to make service their career. God bless them! There is no higher calling in life than service, be it in the military or some other way. The difference is that, if you are a postman, there usually isn't gunplay... usually.

Now, those who've fallen in our wars and conflicts have 'given' the ultimate. Yeah, I still don't like the phrase 'given their lives', but there are so few other phrases that really fit. They deserve our thanks, and our utmost respect. Their families are our families.

Today, since protective devices, armor, vehicles and training have come such a long way, since our medical knowledge and technology so much more advanced, more and more of our warrior-protectors are surviving injuries that would have killed them even only a few decades ago. Thank God for small favors. But there is a down-side.

The down-side of that is that there are now far more of our protectors are having to live with deformity and/or long-lasting injuries. A traumatic brain injury that would have killed a doughboy in World War I is now something that a soldier can live with. But TBIs are not easy to live with. Burns, lost appendages, internal injuries, psychological trauma all add to the burden of our men and women in uniform. We are lagging in helping them. They not only deserve better, they deserve the best that we can provide, regardless of cost or how uncomfortable we might be with it. We OWE them that at a minimum. There should be a parade every week to honor these men and women. We should stop and say thank you every time we see a vet on the street. Every time we see him or her in a store or in our children's schools. Every time we wake from our sound

slumber and feel safe.

Now, if you read this column with any frequency at all, you know that I
think our current action in Iraq was a huge mistake, and one that we'll
be feeling the fallout from for a very long time. But that has nothing to
do with this. THIS is about the men and women who know what it is to
serve. At its most basic level, it's not about conquering the terrorist
threat or defeating the axis of evil or beating back the Hun. It's about
answering a call to be a protector, to stand and answer the call of your
country and your countrymen, to give one's self to defense of one's
country and, often, the world.

But we are given (or have taken, more accurately) this one day out of the
year to salute and honor them. And even though it's only this one day,
many of us content ourselves with simply stoking up the grill and putting
a couple of sixpacks on ice. One day a year to honor and remember the
thousands... hundreds of thousands... of our brothers and sisters that
have fallen while serving our country... it hardly seems to be enough.

So when you're bringing that propane tank down to the store to be filled,
while you're buying the hot dogs and hamburgers, while you're making your
special barbecue sauce for the ribs, getting the potato salad ready...
while you're going about all the preparations for your holiday, think
once or twice of these protectors of ours, past, present and future, who
stand between us and the darkness. They are truly the best among us,
simply because they choose to serve.

And when you DO party, please be responsible about it. Don't drink and
drive. Remember: The life you save may be MINE!

That's all for this week, folks. Tune in again next week, same time, same
station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section   - Video Gamers' Mecca?!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Restore Ban on Violence?
                                    Metroid Prime on Wii!
                                    And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
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        California Moves To Restore Ban on Violent Video Games

California still wants to keep violent video games out of the hands of anyone under 18. On Wednesday, Attorney General Jerry Brown and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger asked the U.S. Supreme Court to reinstate a state law banning the sale or rental of such games to minors.

The law was stricken in February by the U.S. Court of Appeals. The court said the law could limit minors' access to information under the guise of child protection.

The law was passed by California legislators in 2005 but was blocked by the video-game industry. Brown and Schwarzenegger compared the ban on violent games to banning pornography.

"I signed this important measure to ensure parents are involved in determining which video games are appropriate for their children," Schwarzenegger said. "By prohibiting the sale of violent video games to children under the age of 18 and requiring these games to be clearly labeled, this law would allow parents to make better informed decisions for their kids."

Michael D. Gallagher, CEO of the Entertainment Software Association, called the petition by Brown and Schwarzenegger "a complete waste of the state's time and resources." He said a rating system for video games lets parents supervise the games their children play.

The author of the state law, state Sen. Leland Yee, praised the action by Brown and Schwarzenegger. "California's violent video-game law properly seeks to protect children from the harmful effects of excessively violent, interactive video games," he wrote on his Web page.

The law defines a violent video game as one in which "the range of options available to a player includes killing, maiming, dismembering or sexually assaulting an image of a human being."

Nintendo Recycles Metroid Prime Trilogy for The Wii

Nintendo has confirmed that a single-disc version of the classic Metroid Prime Trilogy will be available on August 24 for $50. Although each game is expected to maintain its original storyline, Metroid Prime and Prime 2 gunslingers can now use their Wii remotes to line up precise shots and eliminate deadly enemies.

*According to Nintendo, the new Wii controls are based on the "breakthrough control system" that debuted in Metroid Prime 3: Corruption.

"Metroid Prime Trilogy puts the best first-person adventures all in one place, with a host of new additions that make these three timeless titles more engaging than ever," spun Nintendo spokesperson Cammie Dunaway. "A great deal of care and detail has gone into Metroid Prime Trilogy, providing longtime fans with new ways to experience the games they love."

The Metroid Prime Trilogy was created by Retro Studios and Nintendo, the same developers who designed the original series for the GameCube and Wii systems.

Metroid Prime, defined by Nintendo as a first person-adventure title,

was released in November 2002. In Prime, players control a female bounty hunter known as Samus Aran, who battles space pirates and nefarious biological experiments on the planet Tallon IV.

Prime is set in a large, open-ended world with various regions linked by elevators. Each region offers a set of rooms separated by doors that can be opened with a single, precise shot. Gameplay is focused on solving puzzles, platform jumping and shooting enemies with the assistance of a "lock-on" mechanism.

Samus is assisted in her missions by an innovative heads-up display (HUD) that offers access to radar, a map, ammunition for missiles, health meter, danger meter and a health bar. Displays can be radically altered by wearing different visors, including models that provide thermal imaging, x-ray vision and a scanner to pinpoint enemy weaknesses.

'The Sims' Return With More Personality Quirks

Maybe it's neat, childish, lucky, ambitious and insane - just depends on what traits gamers choose for their neighborhood of virtual playthings in "The Sims 3," Electronic Arts and Maxis' popular life-simulating game for the PC and Mac.

Executive producer Ben Bell said it will focus more on social behavior than ever before.

"'The Sims 3' is a huge step forward for us," said Bell. "You can create incredibly detailed people who have real personalities that you get to design using a feature we call personality traits. By combining words, you can create a new kind of a person that has totally different desires in life and then you get to go fulfill their destiny in the game."

Unlike previous editions in the series, every character will live their lives simultaneously in the fictional town of Sunset Valley.

Bell said "The Sims 3," available June 3, will also feature a moviemaking tool and more options for players to customize their Sims' homes, furnishings and clothes. Gamers can even turn their Sims into kleptomaniacs.

"A Sim who has this trait is going to have wishes in life to steal things from other people," said Bell. "They also have the ability to sneak into a friend's house, walk into a room where nobody happens to be hanging out and maybe swipe something. One of the fun things I've seen people on the team do is build up a whole household of stolen things."

In perhaps a case of life imitating art, a pirated copy of "The Sims 3" has already been leaked on several file-sharing Web sites two weeks before the game's launch.

EA said the pirated version "is a buggy, pre-final" version of the game.

"It's not the full game. Half of the world - an entire second city - is missing," said spokeswoman Holly Rockwood in a statement.

Electronic Arts has announced it is publishing "The Sims 3" without restrictive anti-piracy software known as DRM, a form of copy protection

that requires online authentication.

Iowa Town Seeks Status As Video Gamers' Mecca

For a brief shining moment in the 1980s, Ottumwa was the unlikely hot spot
of the fledgling video game industry as gamers around the globe flocked to
this sleepy Iowa city and its video game arcade for a series of landmark
tournaments.

Gamers set world records, the TV show "That's Incredible" broadcast a
tournament to a national audience, and then-mayor Jerry Parker dubbed
Ottumwa "The Video Game Capital of the World."

The glory days didn't last long. The Twin Galaxies arcade closed within
a couple years, and memories of Pac-Man and Donkey Kong dimmed for
everyone - except arcade owner Walter Day, who dreamed of making Ottumwa
into a permanent game destination.

"You know how your average person fantasizes, when they daydream about
having a new car or having a beautiful wife or inheriting from their
uncle $2 million or something like that? I'm a little bit different," he
said. "I fantasize about owning downtown Ottumwa and turning it into the
first video game-themed amusement attraction."

It's a calling that's been heard by town officials. In April, they
announced plans for an International Video Game Hall of Fame.

"Every town needs a place to be recognized for," said Terry McNitt, head
of Ottumwa's Chamber of Commerce.

Day said he envisioned making Ottumwa a "cultural home base" for the
lucrative worldwide gaming industry. The Entertainment Software
Association, a game publishers trade group, said computer and video game
industry sales climbed to $22 billion in 2008.

Ottumwa's bid to reclaim its past also was inspired by a pair of 2007
video-game documentaries, "King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters" and
"Chasing Ghosts," both of which featured the Twin Galaxies' heyday when
Day was known as the king of video game stats.

Although his arcade closed, Day's scorekeeper status remains. Twin
Galaxies Inc., his Fairfield-based company, tracks rankings, high scores
and championship tournaments for video games around the world.

City officials are passionate about Day's plans, but the idea is mostly
a vision backed by a Facebook group with about 800 members. Officials
said they hoped to buy a building near the original Twin Galaxies site
and want to secure naming rights and a designation as a nonprofit and
build up a Web site.

Day said he's also reached out to his contacts in the gaming industry
for donations. The hall of fame would likely include donated classic
games, exhibits about the industry and an area with modern games for
visitors to play.

Dale Uehling, the city's mayor, noted there was "a lot of interest, a
lot of enthusiasm" for the project.

"The thing is, it's real and it has potential, and I think that's what
excites everybody," McNitt said. "Why Ottumwa, Iowa? We're a population
of 26,000. Well, we're a great little town."

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Conficker Still Attacking 50 Thousand PCs Each Day

Did you think the Conficker hysteria was over? Think again.

The little virus that could is still infecting about 50,000 new PCs
every day, according to Guy Bunker, a computer security expert at
Symantec.

"Much of the media hype seems to have died down around Conficker/Downadup,
but it is still out there spreading far and wide," Bunker wrote in a blog
post.

Bunker posted a heat map that has tracked the virus' spread since February.
The United States, Brazil, and India "top the charts," Bunker wrote,
logging more than 350,000 Conficker incidents each.

Mexico, Italy, and China also logged at least 89,000 infected PCs.

Conficker is a malicious software program that was expected to wreak
havoc on April Fool's Day this year. As April 1 dawned, however,
Conficker was relatively quiet. It eventually picked up more steam, but
security experts said it was more of a problem for government, corporate,
and education users - not the average consumer.

Microsoft Withdraws Request for EU Antitrust Hearing

Microsoft has withdrawn its request for an oral hearing to respond to
European antitrust charges arising from its bundling of the Internet
Explorer Web browser with its Windows operating system. If Microsoft
indeed abused its market position, it has become fairly obvious the
company's efforts were unsuccessful: Firefox now leads IE 7.0 in
European market share.

While Microsoft, with its three versions (6, 7 and 8) of Internet
Explorer still leads in overall browser usage, StatCounter says that so
far in 2009, Firefox 3.0 is slightly ahead of Windows 7.0, each with
approximately 34 percent of the market.

With it's three versions, Microsoft captures an overall 49 percent

share. More Europeans now use a non-Microsoft browser than use Internet Explorer.

Microsoft remains a major player in the European browser market, though its dominance is decreasing over time. In recent weeks, both IE and Firefox have lost share as Opera has enjoyed major increases.

Microsoft had been granted the hearing to explain its position before a ruling is issued in the case. However, the request was withdrawn after the EU refused to move the hearing from June 3-5, a time when Microsoft said many important European antitrust officials would be attending a conference in Zurich.

"Many of the most influential commission and national competition officials with the greatest interest in our case will be in Zurich, Switzerland, and so unable to attend our hearing in Brussels," Microsoft said.

Holding the hearing when many officials would be unable to attend "would deny Microsoft our effective right to be heard and hence deny our 'rights of defense' under European law," Microsoft added.

With Microsoft's browser share waning - some have described the drop as being "like a ton of bricks" - the EU rulng, when it comes, might do more to present Microsoft from competing with surging competitors than protect those competitors from the formerly dominant Microsoft.

Computer Virus Strikes US Marshals, FBI Affected

Law enforcement computers were struck by a Mystery computer virus Thursday, forcing the FBI and the U.S. Marshals to shut down part of their networks as a precaution.

The U.S. Marshals confirmed it disconnected from the Justice Department's computers as a protective measure after being hit by the virus; an FBI official said only that that agency was experiencing similar issues and was working on the problem.

"We too are evaluating a network issue on our external, unclassified network that's affecting several government agencies," said FBI spokesman Mike Kortan. He did not elaborate or identify the other agencies.

Marshals spokeswoman Nikki Credic said the agency's computer problem began Thursday morning. The FBI began experiencing similar problems earlier.

"At no time was data compromised," said Credic. The type of virus and its origin were not determined.

In addition to their external networks, most federal law enforcement agencies have an internal-only network to prevent cyber-snoopers from sensitive data.

In Thursday's incident, the Marshals Service shut down its Internet access and some e-mail while staff worked on the problem. The FBI made similar moves to protect its system.

Twitter Hit With Phishing Attacks

Twitter users who thought friends were directing them to a "funny blog"
Thursday ended up experiencing something completely different: a
phishing scam.

Twitter was hit by two different rounds of phishing Thursday, as
criminals tried to take control of user accounts and then use them as a
springboard to attack others.

Both Twitter and Facebook have been hit with phishing attacks in recent
days. "The social networking attacks are becoming increasingly common,"
said Jamie De Guerre, chief technology officer with antispam vendor
Cloudmark. "Spammers are really moving to attack social networks because
of the popularity of the social networks and also because they're not as
well defended as most e-mail platforms."

Twitter was hit by another high-profile phishing attack in January. This
latest attack had snagged several hundred victims by mid-day Thursday.

Here's how Thursday's attack worked: In the first Twitter phishing
round, hackers created fake Twitter accounts and then started following
legitimate Twitter users. Twitter notifies users when they have new
followers, sending the user a link to the follower's Twitter profile
page. In this case, the profile page contained a link to a phishing
site. So the victim, while investigating his new follower, would end up
on the fake site Tvviter(.)com (this page is not safe to visit) where he
would be asked to enter his Twitter username and password.

Once the phishers obtained their victim's login credentials, they used
them to launch the second round of attacks. In this round, they posted
Twitter messages such as "hey check thiss out" or "Hey. there is this
funny blog going around." These messages include a link to another
phishing site.

Scammers are phishing social networks because they have a better chance
of tricking their victims, said Rik Ferguson, a security researcher with
Trend Micro who blogged about Thursday's phishing campaign. They "tend to
be more successful, because they take advantage of the inherent trust that
these systems are based on," he said.

Once criminals have access to these accounts they can make money by
sending out spam messages via Twitter or Facebook, or they can re-use
the username and password combinations to try to log into other services
such as Web-based e-mail, Ferguson said.

On Thursday, security vendor AppRiver reported a new round of Facebook
phishing attacks. These messages have the subject line "Hello" and read
"Check areps(.)at." This scam, which tries to steal Facebook usernames
and login credentials, also promotes the bests(.)at domain. (These
domains are also unsafe to visit)

Another reason why Twitter spam is so effective is because Twitter users
rarely know what Web sites they're going to visit. Because messages
can't be more than 140 characters long, senders often use services like
TinyURL or UR.LC to shorten their links, hiding the ultimate destination
from Web surfers until they arrive at the site.

Victims are often phished without realizing it. Tim Pratt, a freelance writer based in San Francisco, didn't realize he'd been hacked until his Twitter account sent out one of the phishing messages and friends started contacting him.

After checking his browser history, he realized he'd visited one of the fake sites. "I couldn't believe I had that URL in my history," he said. "I'm usually the one who says, 'Don't click on some random link in Facebook.'"

He thinks he probably clicked on a link sent by a friend early Thursday morning and then logged into the fake site without even realizing it. Pratt quickly changed his password and regained control of his account. "I was more embarrassed than anything else," he said.

Cuba's Cyberwar Intensifies

Cuban bloggers are fighting a cyberwar with the government to give their own version of reality on the communist island, from hotels and using memory sticks and laptops obtained from abroad.

Bloggers with "alternative" agendas say it is becoming harder to evade official censorship, although they have managed to multiply in the past three years in a country where Internet access is limited.

Havana accuses them of being on the payroll of Washington and other governments in a bid to denigrate the 50-year-old Cuban revolution.

The government argues that it has the right to block sites which "encourage subversion."

Under names such as "Generacion Y" (Generation Y) - the internationally-renowned blog of Yoani Sanchez - or "Retazos" (Snippets) by "El Guajiro Azul" (The Blue Peasant), around 30 blogs touch sensitive themes such as Cuban travel permits, flaws in the health and education systems, political prisoners or daily hardships.

"Their entries are full of worn-out political theories that the US State Department used for years in order to include Cuba on all the black lists," according to the official Cuban portal Cubadebate.cu, where communist leader and former president Fidel Castro publishes his column.

Some local journalists have also fought back against what they call "distorted information" about Cuba found in the blogs.

They recently set up a rival website, blogcip.cu, posting a photo of Yoani Sanchez using the Internet in what they said was a luxurious hotel, alongside the text: "the unhappy girl who sells herself as a victim of ruthless persecution."

"Welcome to the blogosphere!" the 33-year-old Sanchez said in an interview with AFP.

"I didn't say I was in hiding. I prefer to save money to go online and recount the reality that isn't reflected in the Cuban press, which repeats the official discourse," the literature graduate said.

Cubans are not permitted Internet accounts, but can use email services in state cybercafes, without access to navigate the web.

Although several hotels sell Internet connection cards, their cost – eight dollars an hour - is prohibitive in a country where the average monthly salary is 17 dollars.

The government accuses the decades-old US embargo of preventing Cuba from accessing underwater cables and forcing it to use slower satellite connections instead. Work, research and study centers therefore have priority for Internet connections.

Bloggers are hosted by foreign servers, write their texts offline and save them on memory cards before updating their blogs from hotel connections or emailing friends to post their updates abroad.

But the limited options are diminishing.

A hotel from the Spanish Melia chain that was popular with bloggers has now banned Internet services for Cubans, and only permits foreigners or overseas residents to use them, a hotel worker confirmed to AFP.

Sanchez posted a video - using a hidden camera - in which a hotel employee explained that the change was due to a new directive from the Tourism Ministry and a communications company, which was also applied by other hotels that have now clamped down on bloggers.

"They want to push us into illegality, to 'underground' accounts. They accuse us buying domains outside of Cuba, but us Cubans cannot buy a '.cu' domain. What do they want, silence?" said Sanchez, winner of the 2008 Spanish Ortega and Gasset prize for digital journalism.

Ivan Garcia, a 40-year-old blogger who received a laptop from his mother who is a resident in Switzerland, said the new measures aimed to drive bloggers into foreign embassies in order to "accuse us of being supported by foreign governments."

Cubadebate.cu accuses the bloggers of using dubious foreign host services, enjoying privileged resources and advanced tools and taking salaries from the enemy.

Sanchez said she uses a free system and earns a wage - with which she pays her blog domain of "hardly 200 euros (280 dollars) per year" – by writing for foreign media and teaching Spanish to tourists.

In this "fierce war of the blogosphere," as one Cuban newspaper called it, the "cyber-dissidents" and "cyber-communists" - as both sides call each other - promise not to cede an inch.

Apple Tablet Coming in 2010?

Apple may have turned its nose up at the netbook market, but that doesn't mean it's ignoring the void between its $400 iPod touch (32GB) and $1,000 MacBook. Piper Jaffray analyst Gene Munster believes Cupertino will launch a touchscreen tablet, priced in the $500 to $700 range, in the first half of 2010.

Rumors of an iPod-like tablet have been swirling for months, with some speculating that Apple is developing a large-screen iPod touch - say, a 7- to 9-inch touchscreen device - that would be large enough for HD movies and maybe a few desktop-style apps. Such a device would provide a better gaming
experience than the iPod touch too.

But please don't call it a netbook, a bargain-bin class of laptop that Apple execs have dissed as "junky."

There's no smoking gun in the latest report, but it does appear as though Apple is up to something. As reported by CNN, Munster's sleuthing led him to conclude that an Apple tablet is only months away.

The signs include: Apple's recent interest in chip designers, including the company's acquisition of low-power chipmaker PA Semi a year ago; Apple's efforts to add multi-touch features to its core products, including iPods, iPhones, and Macs; and the quintessentially Apple need to differentiate itself in an established market. (Think iPods, iPhones, Macs, etc.)

Admittedly, Munster's evidence is pretty slim. But when combined with other reports, including one from the Chinese-language /Commercial Times/ that says Taiwan-based Wintek will soon supply touch panels for an upcoming Apple subnote, an touchscreen tablet seems very possible.

One thing's for sure: An Apple tablet, subnote, or whatever you want to call it, won't copy the successful-if-unspectacular netbook formula of a shrunken laptop with a cramped keyboard and tiny screen.

There's certainly a market for a portable media player larger than the iPod touch, iPhone, or other smart phones. But what would people pay for such a device? If Apple's sweet spot is $700, the alleged tablet would need some fairly robust wireless communications and productivity tools too.

Apple would be foolish to ignore the growing netbook market, which is attracting more and more potential laptop buyers.

Odds are, it won't.

Facebook Now Accepts OpenIDs From Other Sites

You've logged onto Gmail, and then you go over to Facebook - where you're already logged in and your Gmail personal information is automatically available. That kind of portable identity became possible Monday as Facebook announced it has become a "relying party" for the OpenID user-identity framework.

Yahoo, AOL, MySpace and Microsoft also support OpenID. But while others are "issuing parties," Facebook is now a relying party. Issuing parties let you use their OpenID log-in elsewhere, but they don't necessarily accept it from other sites, as relying parties do.

This means you can log in to Gmail and then go to Facebook and find yourself already on board. But you can't log in to Yahoo, for example, and find yourself already logged in to Gmail.

These kinds of one-way streets can lead to confusion about OpenID, and observers have suggested that the standard needs more uniformity before it becomes easy to understand.

In theory, OpenID not only allows data like your profile information to be available on all OpenID-compatible sites, but it also minimizes the number of usernames and passwords a Web user needs to remember.

Facebook already has its own portable-identity service, called Facebook Connect, and it allows users to log in to other sites with their Facebook identities. With support for OpenID, the two competing protocols are now closer to unification, opening up the possibility of a single log-in and portable identity across many sites.

As the largest social-networking site with about 200 million members, Facebook's participation is a big step in that direction.

The company has been a member of the OpenID Foundation since the winter, and has hosted a summit conference about OpenID. On the company's developers blog, Facebook's Luke Shepard wrote Monday that the company has been using its experience in creating Facebook Connect to develop ways to streamline the OpenID log-in process while maintaining security. He said the team found that first-time users who register on Facebook with OpenID are "more likely to become active Facebook users."

Brad Shimmin, an analyst with industry research firm Current Analysis, said the OpenID move was propelled by Facebook's interest in the enterprise market.

"Social-networking sites aren't going to get very far in the enterprise," he said, "if their approach is 'All right, everybody, set up for our standards but they can only be used on one platform.'" He noted that older, professional users are becoming a bigger part of the Facebook membership, and enterprises are developing new kinds of social applications. Both of these point toward the enterprise being a growth area for social-networking sites.

Shimmin added that Facebook's adoption of OpenID will allow users to more readily manage their profiles on various sites. It will also allow users to more easily become part of more communities, since one of the key barriers to entry - register and then fill out all the profile information - will have been eliminated.

NebuAd Closing Doors After Internet Privacy Woes

NebuAd Inc., a company that sought to target ads to consumers based on their online behavior, is going out of business after facing scrutiny over whether its technology infringed on the privacy of Internet surfers.

In court filings this week, NebuAd said it has been winding down its business since last year. It laid off virtually all its employees in July and August, closing its office in Redwood City, Calif., in September. NebuAd once employed over 60 people.

NebuAd has "essentially ceased to exist," according to documents filed with the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

NebuAd's clients, Internet service providers who wanted to share the ad revenue with NebuAd, started dropping out after Congress held hearings last July on the technology, which examined consumers' Internet traffic to determine their interests. Although individual Web sites routinely target advertising, privacy advocates argued that NebuAd's all-encompassing approach went too far, and said consumers' overall Web surfing should be tracked only if they opted into the system.

Among the cable and phone operators that abandoned interest in NebuAd were Charter Communications Inc., Bresnan Communications LLC, The Washington Post Co.'s Cable One Inc. and Embarq Corp.

In Britain, a similar company called Phorm Inc. has also faced complaints since it struck partnerships with three access providers reaching 70 percent of Britain's broadband market - BT Group PLC, Virgin Media Inc. and Carphone Warehouse Group PLC's TalkTalk.

But Phorm spokesman Justin Griffiths said the company has retained its partners. BT has completed its trial of Phorm's ad-targeting service and expects to deploy it this year.

Griffiths said Phorm asks consumers upfront after they log on whether they want to receive targeted ads. Griffiths added that the company has received assurances from the British government that its technology "can be operated in a lawful manner."

Even so, Richard Clayton from Internet think tank Foundation for Information Policy Research in Cambridge, England, believes Phorm is getting some snubs from potential partners.

"I haven't seen any other ISPs queuing up to associate themselves with Phorm at all," he said. "A number of smaller ones have said they won't go anywhere near it."

Move to Online Public Notices Looms Over Papers

The tough economy means the growing suburb of Apex can't replace some computers and police vehicles. So the town's mayor is pleased to save $13,000 by posting public notices of rezoning requests and major land development plans on the town's Web site, rather than in the local newspaper.

"This was good for us for this year, that we didn't have to include that advertising cost in our budget," said Keith Weatherly, mayor of the Raleigh suburb of 35,000, which has an annual budget of $27 million.

To the dismay of struggling newspapers also beset by the same dragging economy, other U.S. communities wish they could get similar savings.

State laws require newspaper notices to inform citizens about official activities, such as changes to tax laws, foreclosures and public meetings. Newspapers have long been deemed the best outlets for these notices because they are widely accessible, relatively inexpensive, have a documented list of subscribers and are easily preserved for records, said Shannon Martin, an Indiana University journalism professor who has studied moves to allow Web posting.

These days, though, city and county governments say posting public notices on Web sites can save taxpayer money - and reach a public increasingly leaving the printed page behind.

Publishers who fear losing one of their most reliable revenue streams contend that nothing replaces the local newspaper as a community bulletin board. Newspapers run public notices on their Web sites in addition to the printed pages, and press associations in about 20 states compile the notices into a searchable database.

Newspaper advocates worry an online shift will reduce the public's understanding about civic affairs and ability to act on the information. In North Carolina, the NAACP opposes online notices because poor and rural communities still have limited access to the Internet.

"People in my community still heavily read the newspaper. They may not be able to afford Internet access, but they can afford 50 cents for the newspaper," said the Rev. William Barber, president of the North Carolina branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. "These are not want ads to buy a car. Many times these notices are about issues like zoning than can affect people in the long term."

Beth Grace, executive director of the North Carolina Press Association, said municipal Web sites have far fewer viewers than newspaper sites. There are also more of the government sites, requiring engaged citizens to repeatedly scour multiple Web pages to know what's coming. "Public notices need to be where the public notices," Grace said.

About half of Internet users have gone to classified ad Web sites like Craigslist at some point, a doubling since 2005, and one out of 11 Americans seek online classified ads on a typical day, according to a new report by the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Because of those changing patterns of readership, the Obama administration has proposed saving $6.7 million over five years by having federal authorities publicize an Asset Forfeiture program on the Internet instead of in newspapers.

At state and local levels, where most notices are printed, the move toward putting taxpayer-financed notices on government Web sites has been building at least since 2002. Now the subject is being discussed in nearly every state, said Tonda Rush, who heads the Public Notice Resource Center, an effort by the newspaper industry to defeat the idea.

North Carolina allowed Apex and a handful of other towns to relax their newspaper ad requirements, though an effort to expand that to other cities failed. Legislators in Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Florida and Arizona this year also considered changing the rules.

(Officials eager to move notices of upcoming civic meetings to the Web tend to leave alone legal notices, which may announce bankruptcies or bond sales and are paid for by the parties involved.)

Newspaper trade associations and independent analysts say it's unclear how much newspapers collect in total from such publicly financed advertising. At one newspaper company, Trib Total Media, which runs the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review and other newspapers in western Pennsylvania, about 7 percent of revenue comes from government-funded legal notices, Chief Executive Ralph Martin said.

Executives note that public notices are less profitable than other forms of advertising in the newspaper.

"A good-sized car dealer is going to run more dollars than the entire category of legals. A single car dealer," Martin said.

But they do produce a consistent revenue stream at a time the industry is hurting. Newspaper advertising revenues fell by 17.7 percent in 2008, with classified ads sinking 29 percent to nearly $10 billion, according to the Newspaper Association of America. While legal and other public notices represent a small fraction of classified ads, the catchall grouping that includes them was the most stable of the four classified ad categories, sliding 4.3 percent last year.

In Arizona, 90 municipalities spent about $900,000 last year on public-notice ads, said Ken Strobeck, executive director of the League of Arizona Cities and Towns. State Rep. Anna Tovar sided with the league in supporting legislation that would let communities move public notices from newspapers to the Internet. Legislators are considering a special advisory committee to study the issue.

Tovar said the Phoenix suburb of Tolleson, where she was vice mayor until February, budgets $40,000 a year for public notices. That is roughly what the city of 6,000 also spends on an after-school program for more than 150 elementary school students who otherwise might be home alone while parents work, she said.

"We could take that money that we would use for newspaper fees for notices and use that for programs that are great priorities in our city," Tovar said. "If this is going to save our city money, I'm all for it."

Google CEO Urges Grads: 'Turn Off Your Computer'

The head of the world's most popular search engine urged college graduates on Monday to step away from the virtual world and make human connections.

Speaking at the University of Pennsylvania's commencement, Google chairman and CEO Eric Schmidt told about 6,000 graduates that they need to find out what is most important to them - by living analog for a while.

"Turn off your computer. You're actually going to have to turn off your phone and discover all that is human around us," Schmidt said. "Nothing beats holding the hand of your grandchild as he walks his first steps."

Schmidt, who holds a doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley, also received an honorary doctor of science degree at the ceremony. Penn President Amy Gutmann cited Schmidt's "manifold contributions to putting the world at humanity's fingertips."

"You have devoted your career to heralding a new age of learning empowered by technology," Gutmann said.

It was Schmidt's second honorary degree in as many days. On Sunday, he received one at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, where he

delivered a similar speech.

At Penn, Schmidt noted the Ivy League school played a key role in the technological industry by creating ENIAC, one of the world's first electronic computers, in 1946.

"Literally everything that you see - every computer, every mobile phone, every device - descends from the principles that were invented right here," Schmidt said.

In the next 10 years, he predicted, technology will advance to the point where it will be possible to have 85 years worth of video on the equivalent of iPod.

He also urged graduates not to lay out a rigid path for themselves. Rewards will gravitate to those who make mistakes and learn from them, Schmidt said.

"You can't plan innovation or inspiration, but you can be ready for it, and when you see it you can jump on it and you can make a difference," he said.

The Class of 2009 is graduating in a tough economic climate, but such downturns can be a time for innovation, Schmidt said. He noted that Rice Krispies, Twinkies and beer cans were all products of the Great Depression - not to mention staples of college life.

He playfully compared today's "Google and Facebook generation" to his own: cell phones vs. phone booths, Wii vs. Pong, blogs vs. newspapers, Red Bull vs. Tang.

Perhaps most notably, Schmidt said, members of his generation spent all their time trying to hide their most embarrassing moments. Today's generation records and posts all those moments on YouTube, he said, drawing laughter from the crowd.

"And I am looking forward to watching these for the next 30 or 40 years," Schmidt said.

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